

03-13-00

A

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant: OKAZAKI et al.  
Docket: 10873.506US01  
Title: HIGH-FREQUENCY CIRCUIT ELEMENT

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.10

'Express Mail' mailing label number: EL435547019US

Date of Deposit: March 10, 2000

I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service 'Express Mail Post Office To Addressee' service under 37 CFR 1.10 and is addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

By: *Linda McCormick*  
Name: Linda McCormick

BOX PATENT APPLICATION  
Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

We are transmitting herewith the attached:

- ☒ Transmittal sheet, in duplicate, containing Certificate under 37 CFR 1.10.
- ☒ Utility Patent Application: Spec. 15 pgs; 17 claims; Abstract 1 pg.  
The fee has been calculated as shown below in the 'Claims as Filed' table.
- ☒ 10 sheets of formal drawings
- ☒ A signed Combined Declaration and Power of Attorney
- ☒ Assignment of the invention to Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd., Recordation Form Cover Sheet
- ☒ A check in the amount of \$690.00 to cover the Filing Fee
- ☒ A check for \$40.00 to cover the Assignment Recording Fee.
- ☒ Other: Communication regarding Priority document; Communication regarding Attorney Change of Address
- ☒ Return postcard

CLAIMS AS FILED

Number of Claims Filed	In Excess of:	Number Extra	Rate	Fee
<b>Basic Filing Fee</b>				\$690.00
<b>Total Claims</b>				
17	20	0	18.00	\$0.00
<b>Independent Claims</b>				
3	3	0	78.00	\$0.00
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM FEE				\$0.00
TOTAL FILING FEE				\$690.00

Please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-2725. A duplicate of this sheet is enclosed.

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.  
3100 Norwest Center, Minneapolis, MN 55402  
(612) 332-5300

By: *DPM*  
Name: Douglas P. Mueller  
Reg. No.: 30,300  
Initials: DPM/tvm

# HIGH-FREQUENCY CIRCUIT ELEMENT

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to a high-frequency circuit element, such as a filter, etc., used for a high-frequency signal processor in communication systems, etc.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 In high-frequency communication systems, a high-frequency circuit element such as a filter, a branching filter, or the like, is an essential component. Many of conventional high-frequency circuit elements, such as resonator filters, etc. have a structure that is electromagnetically shielded by enclosing a resonator in a metal box in order to prevent the radiation of electromagnetic field energy and the entrance of electromagnetic noise from the outside.

15 Figs. 7 and 8 respectively show one example of a conventional high-frequency circuit element using a transmission line structure. In Fig. 7, a box lid 81 shown in Fig. 8 is omitted so that the internal structure of the box of the high-frequency circuit element can be seen.

20 As shown in Figs. 7 and 8, in the conventional high-frequency circuit element,  $\lambda/2$  resonators 86a-86d of a strip conductor pattern and input/output lines 87a, 87b are formed on the surface of the substrate 85 made of a dielectric monocrystal, or the like. The high-frequency circuit having a microstrip structure is fabricated from  $\lambda/2$  resonators 86a-86d, input/output lines 87a, 87b and a ground plane 88. This high-frequency circuit includes  
25 four coupled  $\lambda/2$  resonators and functions as a four-stage band pass filter.

The box of the high-frequency circuit element is formed of a conductor material and includes, as shown in Fig. 8, a box lid 81, a box frame 82 and a box bottom 83. A substrate 85 is fixed to the box bottom 83 with, for example, conductive adhesives so that the box is electrically connected to the ground  
30 plane 88.

On the side face of the box frame 82, input/output terminals 84a, 84b having a coaxial connector are placed. Inner conductors of the input/output terminals 84a, 84b are electrically connected to the input/output lines 87a, 87b and outer conductors of the input/output terminals 84a, 84b are  
35 electrically connected to the box, respectively.

Figs. 9 and 10 respectively show another example of a conventional

high-frequency circuit element using a strip conductor pattern. Also in Fig. 9, a box lid 81 shown in Fig. 10 is omitted so that the internal structure of the box of the high-frequency circuit element can be seen. In the configuration shown in Figs. 9 and 10, eight hairpin resonators 89a-89h are used so as to form an eight-stage band pass filter. The structure of the other parts is the same as the conventional high-frequency circuit element shown in Figs. 7 and 8.

When inputting a high-frequency signal from, for example, the input/output terminal 84a in the conventional high-frequency circuit elements having the structure mentioned above, as shown in Fig. 11, electromagnetic waves in a quasi-TEM mode, i.e. a fundamental mode propagate through the input/output line 87a that is a microstrip conductor transmission line. Fig. 11 is a cross-sectional view showing the box, which is cut along the plane perpendicular to the input/output line 87a. Fig. 11 schematically shows the directions of the electric fields based on the analysis results of a three-dimensional electromagnetic field simulation (HFSS manufactured by Hewlett Packard Company).

The electromagnetic waves in the quasi-TEM mode propagating through the input/output line 87a cause resonance phenomena in each resonator 86a-86d or 89a-89h, thus functioning as a band pass filter. Therefore, only an in-band signal of the filter passes through between the input/output lines 87a and 87b and is output therefrom.

However, in the conventional high-frequency circuit element mentioned above, not only the quasi-TEM mode in which electromagnetic waves propagate through the strip conductor transmission line is excited, but also a waveguide mode is excited due to discontinuity in the converting part from the input/output terminals 84a, 84b to the input/output lines 87a, 87b, as well as due to the component of the radiation electric field caused by the quasi-TEM mode, as shown in Fig. 12. The wave guide mode is an unwanted higher-order mode, in which electromagnetic waves propagate through the space between the box lid 81 and the substrate 85. As a result, the frequency characteristic of the high-frequency circuit element is adversely affected. Similarly to Fig. 11, Fig. 12 is a cross-sectional view showing the box, which is cut along the plane perpendicular to the input/output line 87a, and illustrating the analysis result of the three-dimensional electromagnetic field simulation.

Unlike the quasi-TEM mode, since such a waveguide mode is not

under the influence of the filter function, electromagnetic waves propagate in regardless of the passband of the filter, thus deteriorating the characteristic of the high-frequency circuit element as a filter. Particularly, there arise some problems, for example, the decrease in attenuation in a rejection band, i.e.,  
5 the increase in the background level, the deterioration of capability of rejecting out-of-band signals of the filter.

In order to reduce the influence of the waveguide mode (unwanted higher-order mode), the box may be designed so that the cutoff frequency in the space between the box lid 81 and the substrate 85 is set to be sufficiently  
10 higher than the center frequency of the filter. However, great attenuation, for example, -80dB or less is required in the rejection band and so the propagation of only a few high-frequency signals may cause a problem. Consequently, a solution only by designing the box taking into account the cutoff frequency is not sufficient.

15 Such a problem becomes further significant when it is necessary to miniaturize a high-frequency circuit element, to increase an operation frequency or to use a material such as a superconductive conductor having a large conductivity, in order to reduce a loss.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 It is an object of the present invention to solve the problems of the prior art mentioned above. That is, the object of the present invention is to provide a high performance high-frequency circuit element capable of suppressing the generation of an unwanted higher-order mode in the space inside the metal box of the high-frequency circuit element and having an  
25 excellent frequency characteristic.

In a basic configuration, a high-frequency circuit element according to the present invention includes a substrate, a high-frequency circuit formed on the substrate, a metal box electromagnetically shielding the high-frequency circuit by enclosing the substrate, an input/output terminal placed on the  
30 metal box and inputting/outputting a high-frequency signal to/from the high-frequency circuit, and at least one shielding element for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode by suppressing the propagation of high frequency waves between the input-output terminals.

35 In a first specific configuration, a high-frequency circuit element according to the present invention includes a substrate, a high-frequency circuit formed on the substrate, a metal box electromagnetically shielding the high-frequency circuit by enclosing the substrate, an input/output terminal

placed on the metal box and inputting/outputting a high-frequency signal to/from the high-frequency circuit, and at least one plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode substantially dividing an internal space of the metal box and cutting off the propagation path for the high-frequency waves in the internal space of the metal box.

According to such a configuration, having the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode, it is made possible to suppress the propagation of the electromagnetic waves in a waveguide mode generated in the space inside the box so as to prevent the deterioration of the frequency characteristic due to excitation of the unwanted higher-order mode. Therefore, it is possible to provide a high performance high-frequency circuit element having an excellent frequency characteristic.

It is desirable in the above-mentioned configuration that the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made of a conductor. Thus, the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher order mode can be improved, because the conductor does not transmit electromagnetic waves. In such a configuration, it is desirable that the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode made of a conductor is electrically connected to the metal box. Thus, the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode made of a conductor functions as an electric wall with respect to the electromagnetic waves, so that the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode can be enhanced further.

Furthermore, in the above-mentioned first specific configuration, it is desirable that the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made of a dielectric having a high dielectric constant. Thereby, electromagnetic waves are reflected from or absorbed by the dielectric and cannot pass through the plate. Consequently, the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode can be enhanced.

It is desirable in the first specific configuration that the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is placed spanning over and approximately perpendicular to at least one input/output line of the high-frequency circuit and placed so that it is not in an electric contact with the input/output line. Thereby, the connection portion where the input/output terminal is connected to the input/output line is isolated from the main circuit part, such as a resonator, of the high-frequency circuit. Consequently, it is possible to prevent the electromagnetic waves of the unwanted higher-order mode, which are excited due to the discontinuity of the connection portion,

from adversely affecting the high-frequency circuit. It is desirable in this configuration that the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode has a cut-out so that it is not in electric contact with the input/output lines of the high-frequency circuit. Thereby, the lower end of the plate can be  
5 extended to the position that is in contact with the substrate in a place where the high-frequency circuit element is not provided. Consequently, the effect of suppressing the unwanted higher-order mode can further be enhanced.

According to the second specific configuration of the high-frequency circuit element according to the present invention, the high-frequency circuit  
10 element includes a substrate, a high-frequency circuit formed on the substrate, a metal box electromagnetically shielding the high-frequency circuit by enclosing the substrate, an input/output terminal placed on the metal box and inputting/outputting a high-frequency signal to/from the high-frequency  
15 circuit, and at least one cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode covering at least one input/output line of the high-frequency circuit in an internal space of the metal box and suppressing the propagation of high-frequency waves.

According to such a configuration, having the cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode makes it possible to suppress the propagation of  
20 the electromagnetic waves in a waveguide mode generated in the space inside the box so as to prevent the deterioration of the frequency characteristic due to excitation of the unwanted higher-order mode. Therefore, it is possible to provide a high performance high-frequency circuit element having an excellent frequency characteristic.

It is desirable in the second specific configuration that the cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made of a conductor. Thus, the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode is enhanced, because the conductor does not transmit electromagnetic waves. It is desirable in this configuration that the cover for interrupting an  
30 unwanted higher-order mode made of a conductor is electrically connected to the metal box. Thus, the cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode functions as an electric wall with respect to electromagnetic waves. Consequently, it is possible further to enhance the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode.

It is desirable in the second specific configuration that the cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made of a dielectric having a  
35 high dielectric constant. Thus, electromagnetic waves are reflected from or

absorbed by the dielectric and cannot pass through the cover, so that the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode can be enhanced.

It is desirable in the first and second specific configurations that the high-frequency circuit is a high-frequency filter. Thus, excitation of the unwanted higher-order mode is suppressed by the plate or cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode. Consequently, it is possible to prevent the higher-order mode in the out-of-band frequency, which is not rejected by the filter, from propagating and being output. Therefore, the filter having an excellent out-of-band attenuation characteristic can be attained. In this configuration, it is desirable that the high-frequency filter has a plurality of coupled planar circuit resonators. Thus, it is possible to prevent the unwanted higher-order mode excited by the radiation from the resonators from inputting from the input/output line and outputting from the input/output terminal. Consequently, it is possible to prevent the higher-order mode in the out-of-band frequency that is not rejected by the filter from propagating and being output. Therefore, it is possible to attain a filter having an excellent out-of-band attenuation characteristic.

Furthermore, in the first and second specific configurations, it is desirable that the high-frequency circuit is a superconductor filter. Thus, it is possible to radically reduce the conductor loss at the resonator, so that low loss and a steep skirt can be attained.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective view showing a schematic structure of a high-frequency circuit element according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is an exploded perspective view showing a high-frequency circuit element according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a graph showing a frequency characteristic of the high-frequency circuit element according to the first embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a graph showing a frequency characteristic of a high-frequency circuit element without a plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode according to a comparative example of the present invention.

Fig. 5 is a perspective view showing a schematic structure of a high-frequency circuit element according to a second embodiment of the present

invention.

Fig. 6 is an exploded perspective view showing the high-frequency circuit element according to the second embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 7 is a perspective view showing a schematic structure of one example of a high-frequency circuit element according to a prior art.

Fig. 8 is an exploded perspective view showing the high-frequency circuit element according to the prior art.

Fig. 9 is a perspective view schematically showing a structure of another example of a high-frequency circuit element according to a prior art.

Fig. 10 is an exploded perspective view showing the high-frequency circuit element according to the prior art.

Fig. 11 is an explanatory view illustrating the propagation of electromagnetic waves in a quasi-TEM mode.

Fig. 12 is an explanatory view illustrating the propagation of electromagnetic waves in a waveguide mode.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Hereinafter, the present invention will be described by way of embodiments with reference to drawings.

(First Embodiment)

Figs. 1 and 2 respectively show a schematic structure of a high-frequency circuit element according to a first embodiment of the present invention. In Fig. 1, a box lid 11 shown in Fig. 2 is omitted so that the internal structure of the box can be seen.

As shown in Figs. 1 and 2, in a high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment, hairpin resonators 16a-16h of a strip conductor pattern and input/output lines 17a, 17b are formed on the surface of the substrate 15 made of a dielectric monocrystal, or the like. The high-frequency circuit having a microstrip structure is fabricated from these hairpin resonators 16a-16h, input/output lines 17a, 17b and a ground plane 18. This high-frequency circuit includes eight coupled hairpin resonators and functions as an eight-stage band pass filter.

The high-frequency circuit element has a box for enclosing and electromagnetically shielding the above-mentioned high-frequency circuit. The box is formed of a conductor material and includes, as shown in Fig. 2, a box lid 11, a box frame 12 and a box bottom 13. A substrate 15 is fixed to the box bottom 13 with, for example, conductive adhesives so that the box is electrically connected to the ground plane 18.



On the side face of the box frame 12, input/output terminals 14a, 14b having a coaxial connector are mounted. Inner conductors of the input/output terminals 14a, 14b are electrically connected to the input/output lines 17a, 17b and outer conductors of the input/output terminals 14a, 14b are electrically connected to the box frame 12, respectively.

Furthermore, the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment has plates 1a-1c for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode made of a conductor material. The plates 1a-1c are fixed to the box frame 12 with, for example, conductive adhesives so as to be electrically connected to the box. Thus, the plates cut off a propagation path for high-frequency waves by approximately or substantially dividing the internal space of the box.

Of the plates 1a-1c, the plate 1b located in the middle is placed between the hairpin resonators 16a and 16h. Therefore, the plate 1b is fixed to the box frame 12 at a certain gap with respect to the substrate 15 so that it is not in contact with the strip conductor (hairpin resonators 16a-16h) of the high-frequency circuit.

In the meantime, the plates 1a, 1c located on both sides are respectively placed in the outer side of each hairpin resonator 16a, 16h. That is, the plates 1a, 1c are placed spanning over the input/output lines 17a, 17b. In order to do so, each plate 1a, 1c has a semicircular cut-out. The lower end of each plate 1a, 1c except for the cut-out is placed closely to the surface of the substrate 15 without a gap between the substrate 15 and the lower end of the plates.

It is preferable that the plates 1a, 1c are placed approximately perpendicularly to the input/output lines 17a, 17b. Thereby, connection portions at which the input/output terminals 14a, 14b are connected to the input/output lines 17a, 17b are isolated from the hairpin resonators 16a and 16h that are the main circuit of the high-frequency circuit. Consequently, it is possible to prevent the electromagnetic waves in the unwanted higher-order mode, which are excited due to the discontinuity of the connection portion, from adversely affecting the high-frequency circuit.

According to the configuration in which the plates 1a-1c made of a conductor material are electrically connected to the box frame 12, the plates 1a-1c function as electric walls with respect to electromagnetic waves, thus improving the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode.

The plates 1a-1c can be formed of a dielectric having a high dielectric

constant. In this case, since electromagnetic waves are reflected from or absorbed by the dielectric and cannot pass through the plates 1a-1c, the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode can be enhanced. As the dielectric constant is higher, the reflection coefficient increases and the above-mentioned effect is enhanced. It is particularly preferable that when the dielectric having a high dielectric constant is about 10 or more, the reflection coefficient on the dielectric boundary becomes about 0.5 or more and the significant effect can be attained.

Next, the operation of the high-frequency circuit element as mentioned above of this embodiment will be explained.

When the input/output terminal 14a is an input side and the input/output terminal 14b is an output side, the high-frequency signal from the input/output terminal 14a is converted from a TEM mode, which is a fundamental mode for the coaxial transmission line, to a quasi-TEM mode, which is a fundamental mode of the microstrip line (see Fig. 11); then propagates along the input/output line 17a; and enters the high-frequency circuit.

The high-frequency circuit functions as a band pass filter when each of the hairpin resonators 16a-16h effect the resonance phenomenon. Therefore, only signals in the frequency band corresponding to a passband of the bandpass filter are output to the input/output line 17b in a quasi-TEM mode; converted into the TEM mode again; and then outputted from the input/output terminal 14b.

Moreover, the box including the box lid 11, the box frame 12 and the box bottom 13 has a role of preventing the loss of electromagnetic energy due to the radiation of high-frequency signals from the input/output lines 17a, 17b and the microstrip conductor (the hairpin resonators 16a-16h) constituting the high frequency circuit, and the entrance of electromagnetic noise from the outside.

As mentioned above, the high-frequency circuit element functions in a fundamental mode of the microstrip conductor. However, it is necessary to prevent the generation of a waveguide mode (see Fig. 12) which is one of the unwanted higher-order modes other than the fundamental mode and which propagates through the box as a rectangular waveguide. Such a waveguide mode is generated due to the conversion in the propagation mode caused during the transmission from the input/output terminal 14a to the input/output line 17a or the radiation of electromagnetic waves from the

microstrip conductor.

Therefore, in the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment, the plates 1a-1c function as electric walls with respect to the electromagnetic waves propagating in the space between the substrate 15 and the box. Thus, it is possible to prevent the propagation of such electromagnetic waves in the unwanted higher-order mode.

A comparative experiment was carried out in order to investigate the effects of the plates 1a-1c. The results are explained with reference to Figs. 3 and 4.

First, in order to start the comparative experiment, the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment was produced under the following conditions.

For the substrate 15,  $\text{LaAl}_2\text{O}_3$  was used, which was a dielectric of a high dielectric constant, having a length of the narrow side of 12.7 mm, a length of the longer side of 25.4 mm, a thickness of 0.5 mm and a dielectric constant of 24. A ground plane 18 was formed on one surface of the substrate 15 by vapor-depositing a superconductive conductor, YBCO. Furthermore, on the other surface of the substrate 15, the 0.5 mm-width input/output lines 17a, 17b and hairpin resonators 16a-16h designed as band pass filters having a center frequency of 1.9 GHz were formed by vapor deposition, etching, and the like, also by the use of a superconductive conductor, YBCO.

The box was formed by mechanically processing brass and gold-plating the surface thereof. The box had an outside size of 37.8 mm  $\times$  25.1 mm  $\times$  15 mm and an inside size of 25.6 mm  $\times$  12.9 mm  $\times$  4.1 mm.

The plates 1a, 1c were formed by mechanically processing brass and gold-plating the surface thereof. Each of the plates 1a, 1c had a length of the longer side of 12.9 mm, a length of the narrow side of 3.6 mm, a thickness of 0.3 mm and a radius of the cut-out of 2 mm.

The plate 1b was formed by mechanically processing brass and gold-plating the surface thereof. The plate 1b had a length of the longer side of 12.9 mm, a length of the narrow side of 3.3 mm, and a thickness of 0.3 mm.

The plates 1a, 1c were respectively placed 3 mm apart from the inner surfaces of the box on which the input/output terminals 14a, 14b were respectively placed. The plate 1b was placed between the plates 1a, 1c.

The frequency characteristic of the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment formed under the above-mentioned conditions was measured. Fig. 3 shows the resultant characteristic. Herein, the measurement was

carried out under the cooling condition at the absolute temperature of 64 K.

As a comparative example, a high-frequency circuit element was formed under the same conditions as mentioned above except that the plates 1a-1c were not provided. The frequency characteristic was measured under the cooling condition at the absolute temperature of 64 K. Fig. 4 shows the resultant characteristics.

As is apparent from the comparison between Fig. 3 and Fig. 4, in the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment, the attenuation in the rejection band was improved by about  $-10$  dB, i.e., from the conventional values of about  $-70$  dB to about  $-80$  dB, by the effect of the plates 1a-1c. The result signifies that the capability of eliminating unwanted out-of-band signals as a filter was improved.

As mentioned above, in the high-frequency circuit element according to this embodiment, the frequency characteristic is improved by providing the plates 1a-1c.

In the above explanation, the plates 1a-1c were separately formed and fixed to the box frame 12 with conductive adhesive, etc. In place of the conductive adhesives, conductive screws may be used. Furthermore, it is not always necessary to fix the plates to the box frame 12. For example, the plates 1a-1c may be fixed to the box lid 11 with conductive adhesives or screws, and then be brought into a metallic contact with the box frame 12 to be electrically connected. Or it is possible to form the plates 1a-1c as one unit with the box.

Furthermore, the number and position of the plates, the shape and size of the cut-out, the thickness of the plate, and the optimum value such as the dielectric constant, etc. of materials may be different depending upon the structures of the high-frequency circuit and the box. Accordingly, the present invention is not necessarily limited to the configuration mentioned above. The above explanation referred to the configuration in which the space inside the rectangular parallelepiped box was approximately divided into three parts by using the plates for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode. However, the present invention is not necessarily limited to this configuration. The improved frequency characteristic can be attained by any configuration as long as the connection portion (discontinuous portion) between the input/output terminal 14a and input/output line 17a and the connection portion (discontinuous portion) between the input/output terminal 14b and input/output line 17b are separated or divided so that each connection portion

belongs to the different space, respectively.

Therefore, the number of the plates is not necessarily limited to three. Furthermore, the shape of the plate is not necessarily limited to the shape mentioned above. Also, the shape of the cut-out is not necessarily limited to a semicircular shape. It is possible to attain the same effect by employing, for example, a triangle shape, etc.

Furthermore, the material of the plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is not necessarily limited to a conductor material. Any materials can be used as long as they do not transmit electromagnetic waves. Therefore, a dielectric having the high dielectric constant capable of reflecting or absorbing electromagnetic waves may be used. It is possible to attain the same effect by using, for example,  $\text{LaAl}_2\text{O}_3$  having a dielectric constant of 24, which is cut out similarly to the substrate.

(Second Embodiment)

Figs. 5 and 6 respectively show a schematic structure of a high-frequency circuit element according to another embodiment of the present invention. In Fig. 5, a box lid 11 shown in Fig. 6 is omitted so that the internal structure of the box can be seen.

The high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment has covers 2a, 2b for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode made of a conductor material as shown in Fig. 6, instead of the plates 1a-1c for interrupting unwanted higher-order mode used in the high-frequency circuit element according to the first embodiment. The structures of the other parts are similar to those of the high-frequency circuit element according to the first embodiment shown in Figs. 1 and 2 and so the explanations are not repeated.

The covers 2a, 2b have a semicircular shape and are placed so that they respectively cover the input/output lines 17a, 17b on the substrate 15. And the covers 2a, 2b are respectively fixed to the inner surface of the box frame 12, on which the input/output terminals 14a, 14b are respectively connected, with, for example, conductive adhesives so that the covers 2a, 2b are electrically connected to the box.

The high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment is the same as that of the first embodiment in that the hairpin resonators 16a-16h function as band pass filters. Also in the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment, it is necessary to prevent the generation of a waveguide mode (see Fig. 12), which is one of the unwanted higher-order modes other than the fundamental mode and which propagates through the box as a rectangular

waveguide. Such a waveguide mode is generated due to the radiation of electromagnetic waves excited by the conversion of the propagation mode during the transmission from the input/output terminal 14a to the input/output line 17a, or due to the radiation of electromagnetic waves from the microstrip conductor, i.e., hairpin resonators 16a-16h.

In the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment, when the input/output terminal 14a is an input side and the input/output terminal 14b is an output side, the cover 2a provided so as to cover the input/output line 17a, has an effect of suppressing the dissipation of electromagnetic waves in a higher-order mode excited by the conversion of the propagation mode caused during the transmission from the input/output terminal 14a to the input/output terminal 17a.

Furthermore, the cover 2b provided so as to cover the input/output line 17b, has an effect of suppressing the higher-mode electromagnetic waves excited by the radiation from the hairpin resonators 16a-16h that are a microstrip conductor from entering the input/output line 17b.

According to the configuration mentioned above, it is possible to suppress the propagation of signals due to the unwanted higher-order mode and thus to prevent the deterioration of the out-of-band characteristic of the filter.

For example, the high-frequency circuit element was produced under the same conditions as those of the comparative example shown in the first embodiments, namely, for example, the same materials, the same shape and the same size of the substrate 15, hairpin resonator 16a-16h, the box lid 11, the box frame 12, the box bottom 13, and the input/output terminals 14a, 14b were employed as the first embodiment, and the covers 2a, 2b were formed in a half cylinder shape having an inner diameter of 4 mm, a thickness of 0.5 mm, and a length of 3 mm by mechanically processing brass. When the frequency characteristic of the thus produced high frequency circuit element was measured, the same results as those of Fig. 3 were attained.

When the frequency characteristic of the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment was compared with that shown as a comparative example in Fig. 4 without having the covers 2a, 2b, the attenuation of the rejection band is improved by about  $-10$  dB. The result signifies that the capability of eliminating out-of-band unwanted signals was improved.

Thus, the high-frequency circuit element of this embodiment improves the frequency characteristic by providing the covers 2a, 2b.

Furthermore, it is preferable that the covers 2a, 2b are formed of a dielectric having high dielectric constant. According to such a preferred embodiment, electromagnetic waves are reflected from or absorbed by the dielectric and cannot pass through the covers 2a, 2b, thus improving the effect of suppressing the propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode. As the dielectric constant is higher, the reflection coefficient increases and the effect is improved. It is particularly preferable that when the dielectric having a high dielectric constant of about 10 or more is used, the reflection coefficient on the dielectric boundary is about 0.5 or more and the significant effect can be attained.

In the above explanation, the covers 2a, 2b are produced separately and fixed to the box. However, the present invention is not necessarily limited to this configuration. It is also possible to form the covers as one unit with the box. Furthermore, for the shape, semicircular structure is herein employed. However, it is possible to attain the same effect by using a cover having other shapes. Examples of the other shaped cover include a cover having a rectangular U-shaped cross section.

Furthermore, the shape and size of the cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode, the optimum value such as the dielectric constant, etc. of materials, may be different depending upon the structures of the high-frequency circuit and the box. Accordingly, the present invention is not necessarily limited to the configuration mentioned above.

Furthermore, while in each of the above-mentioned embodiments, the high-frequency circuit element having a high-frequency circuit of a strip conductor pattern including a plurality of coupled hairpin resonators are explained, the high-frequency circuit is not necessarily limited to the strip conductor pattern. It is possible to attain the same effect by using circuit structure based on other resonator structures, for example,  $\lambda/2$  resonator, etc.

The structure of the high-frequency circuit is not necessarily limited to the microstrip structure, and it is possible to attain the same effect by using other planar circuit structure such as a coplanar structure etc., microwave semiconductor integrated circuit structure, or the like. Furthermore, the structure of the high-frequency circuit is not necessarily limited to the filter of resonator, and it is possible to attain the same effect by using other high frequency circuit, for example, an amplifier, an isolator, etc.

As mentioned above, in the high-frequency circuit element according

to the present invention, by providing a plate or cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode, it is possible to suppress the excitation and propagation of the unwanted higher order mode such as a waveguide mode, etc., generated in the space inside the box. Therefore, it is possible to provide  
5 a high performance high-frequency circuit element which has an excellent frequency characteristic and which is less deteriorated due to the unwanted higher-order mode.

Furthermore, the function of suppressing excitation and propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode becomes effective even under the severe  
10 conditions in which operation frequency is higher, low loss conductor materials are used for the conductor material of the high frequency circuit, or the like. Therefore, the high-frequency circuit element according to the present invention can function in super high frequency wave such as a millimeter wave. In this case, a high-frequency circuit element having lower  
15 loss can be realized.

The invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. The embodiments disclosed in this application are to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated  
20 by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description, all changes that come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are intended to be embraced therein.



What is claimed is:

1. A high-frequency circuit element comprising  
a substrate,  
a high-frequency circuit formed on said substrate,  
a metal box electromagnetically shielding said high-frequency  
circuit by enclosing said substrate,  
an input/output terminal placed on said metal box and  
inputting/outputting a high-frequency signal to/from said high-frequency  
circuit, and  
at least one shielding element for interrupting an unwanted  
higher-order mode by suppressing the propagation of high frequency waves  
between the input-output terminals.
2. A high-frequency circuit element comprising  
a substrate,  
a high-frequency circuit formed on said substrate,  
a metal box electromagnetically shielding said high-frequency  
circuit by enclosing said substrate,  
an input/output terminal placed on said metal box and  
inputting/outputting a high-frequency signal to/from said high-frequency  
circuit, and  
at least one plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode  
substantially dividing an internal space in said metal box and cutting off the  
propagation path for the high-frequency waves in the internal space of said  
metal box.
3. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 2, wherein  
said plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made of a  
conductor.
4. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 3, wherein  
said plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is electrically  
connected to said metal box.
5. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 2, wherein  
said plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made of a

dielectric having a high dielectric constant.

5 6. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 2, wherein said plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is placed spanning over and approximately perpendicular to at least one input/output line of said high-frequency circuit and placed so that it is not in an electric contact with said input/output line.

10 7. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 6, wherein said plate for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode has a cut-out so that it is not in electric contact with the input/output line of said high-frequency circuit.

15 8. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 2, wherein said high-frequency circuit is a high-frequency filter.

9. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 8, wherein said high-frequency filter has a plurality of coupled planar circuit resonators.

20 10. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 2, wherein said high-frequency circuit is a superconductive high-frequency filter.

25 11. A high-frequency circuit element comprising  
a substrate,  
a high-frequency circuit formed on said substrate,  
a metal box electromagnetically shielding said high-frequency  
circuit by enclosing said substrate,  
an input/output terminal placed on said metal box and  
inputting/outputting a high-frequency signal to/from said high-frequency  
30 circuit, and  
at least one cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode  
covering at least one input/output line of said high-frequency circuit in an  
internal space of said metal box, and suppressing the propagation of high-  
frequency waves.

35 12. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 11, wherein said cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made

of a conductor.

13. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 12,  
wherein said cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is  
5 electrically connected to said metal box.

14. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 11,  
wherein said cover for interrupting an unwanted higher-order mode is made  
of a dielectric having a high dielectric constant.  
10

15. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 11,  
wherein said high-frequency circuit is a high-frequency filter.

16. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 15,  
15 wherein said high-frequency filter has a plurality of coupled planar circuit  
resonators.

17. The high-frequency circuit element according to claim 11,  
wherein said high-frequency circuit is a superconductive high-frequency filter.

## ABSTRACT

A high-frequency circuit element including a substrate, a high-frequency circuit formed on the substrate, a metal box electromagnetically shielding the high-frequency circuit by enclosing the substrate and an input/output terminal placed on the metal box and inputting/outputting a high-frequency signal to/from the high-frequency circuit. Adding at least one plate for interrupting unwanted higher-order mode cutting off the propagation path of the high frequency waves in the space inside the metal box by substantially dividing the space inside the metal box makes it possible to cut off the propagation path where the high frequency waves propagates in the space inside the box and to suppress excitation and propagation of the unwanted higher-order mode that adversely affects the frequency characteristic of the high frequency circuit element.

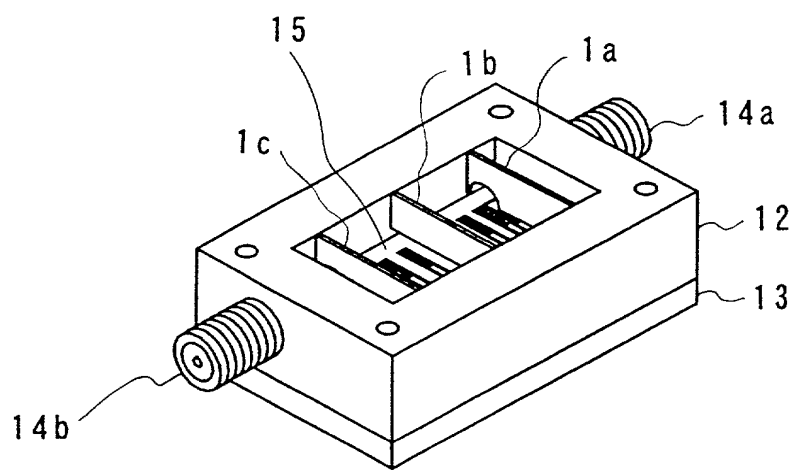


FIG. 1

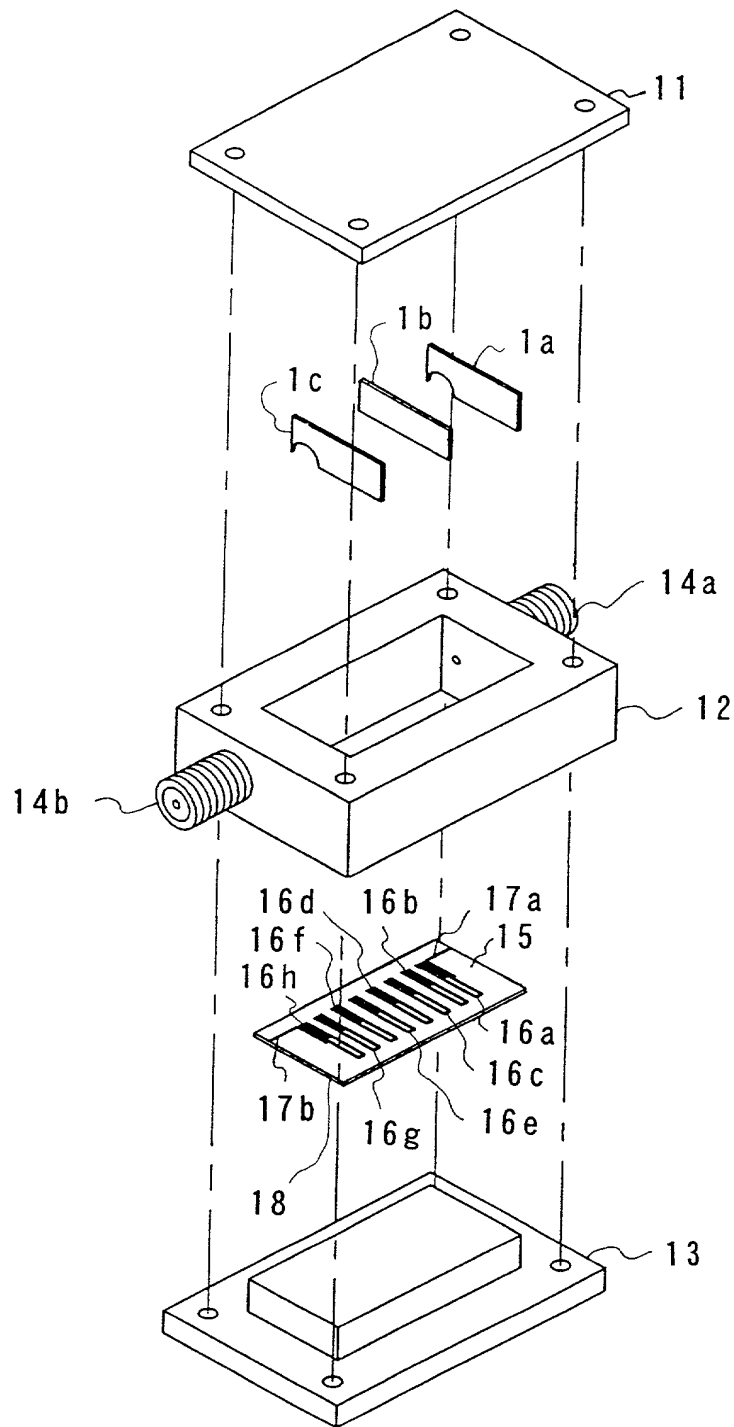


FIG. 2

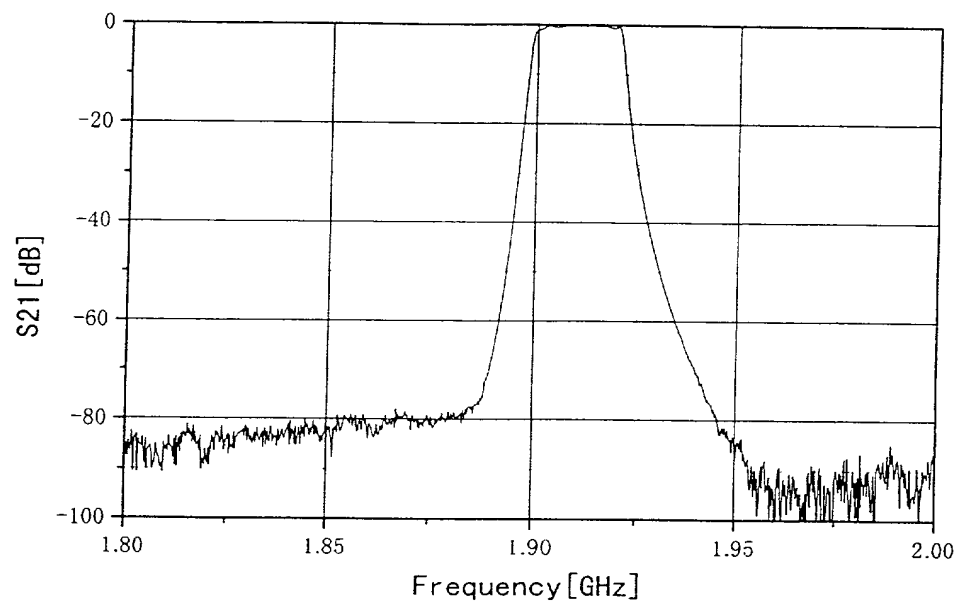


FIG. 3

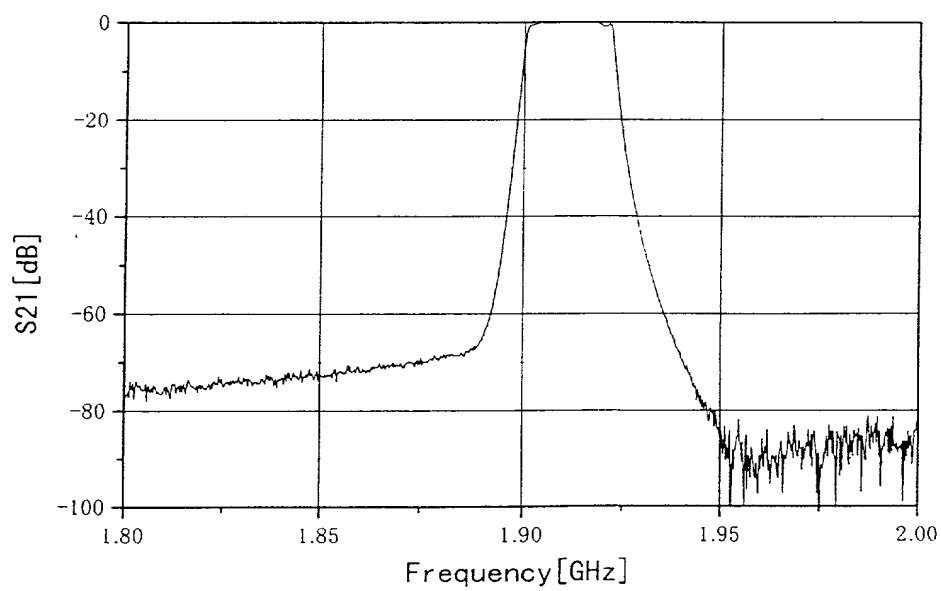


FIG. 4

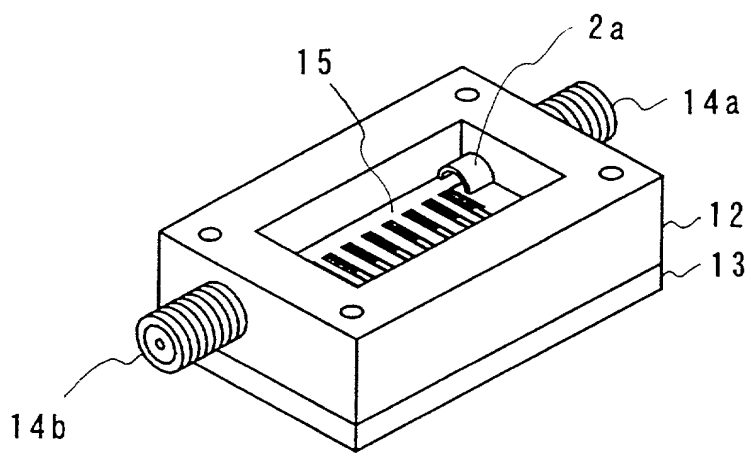


FIG. 5



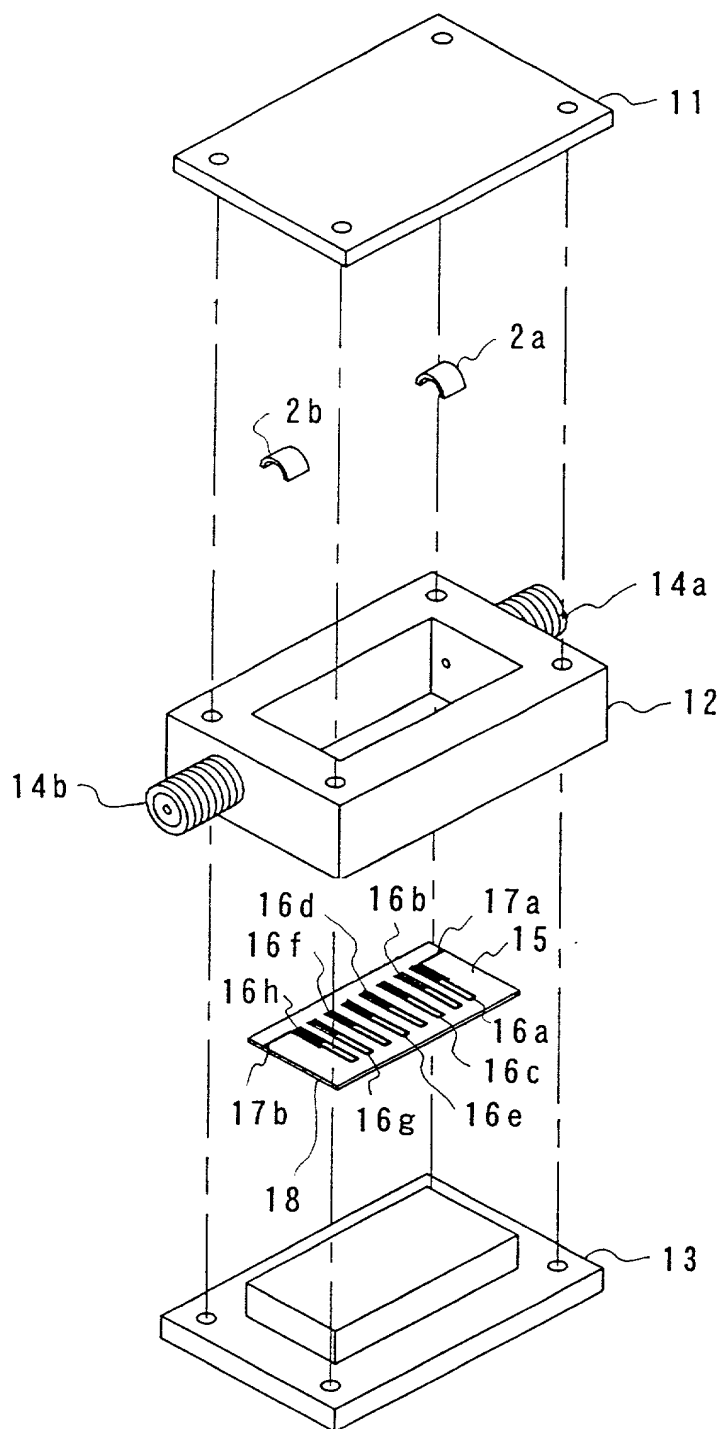


FIG. 6

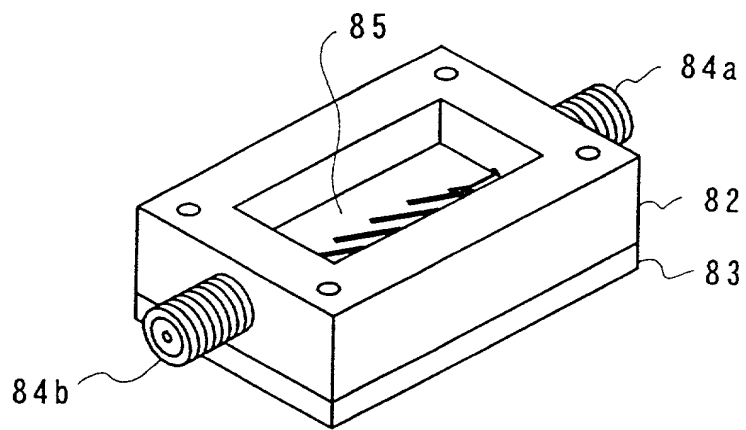


FIG. 7  
PRIOR ART

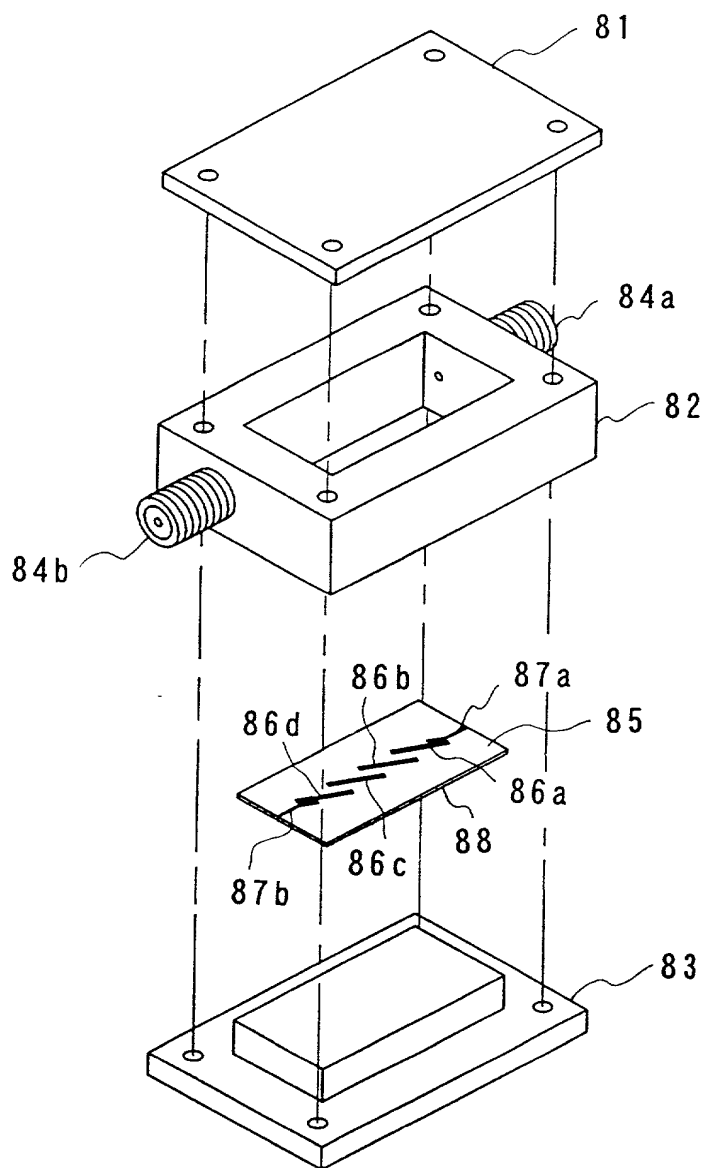


FIG. 8  
PRIOR ART

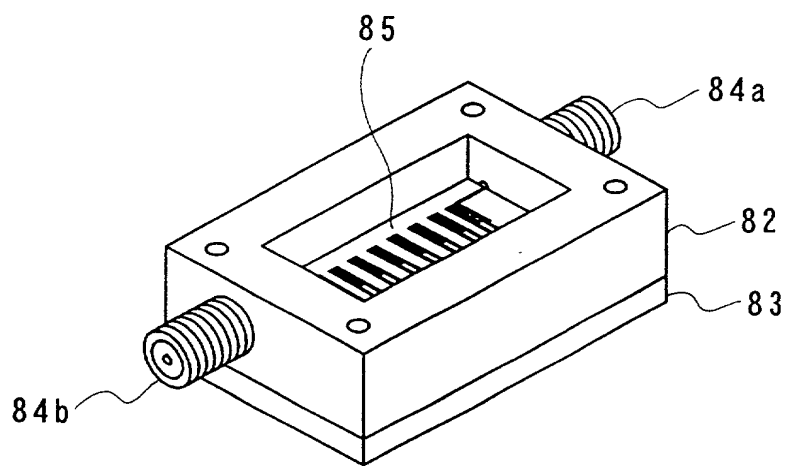


FIG. 9  
PRIOR ART

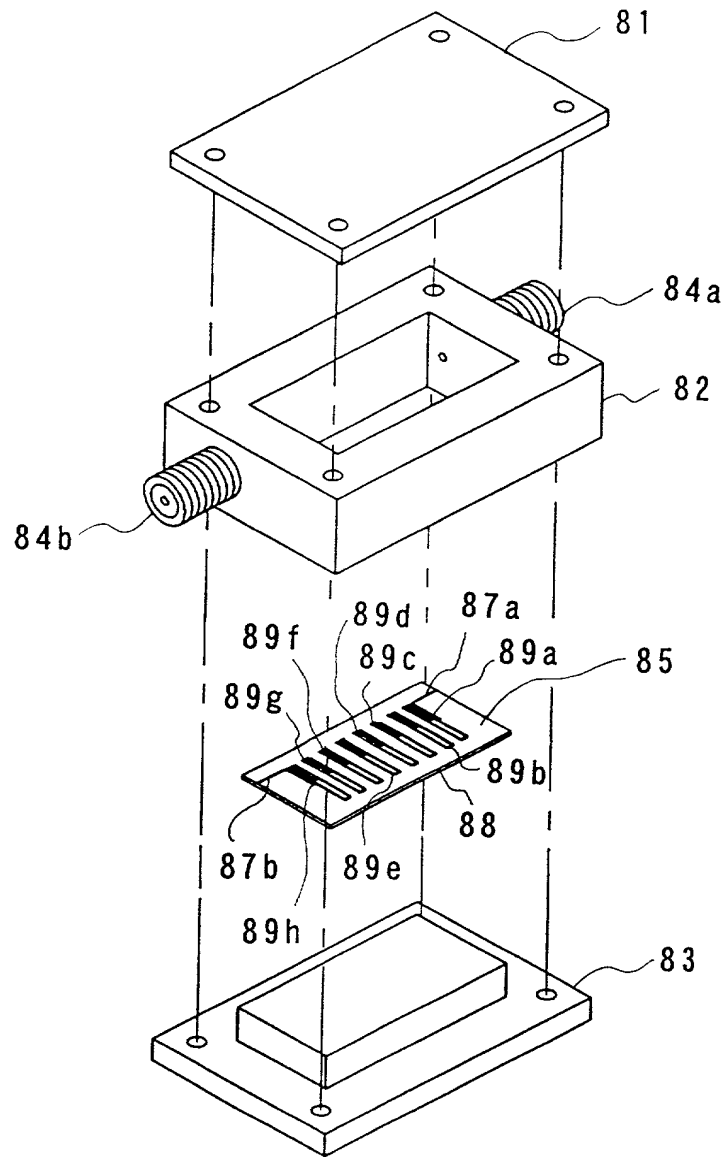


FIG. 10  
PRIOR ART

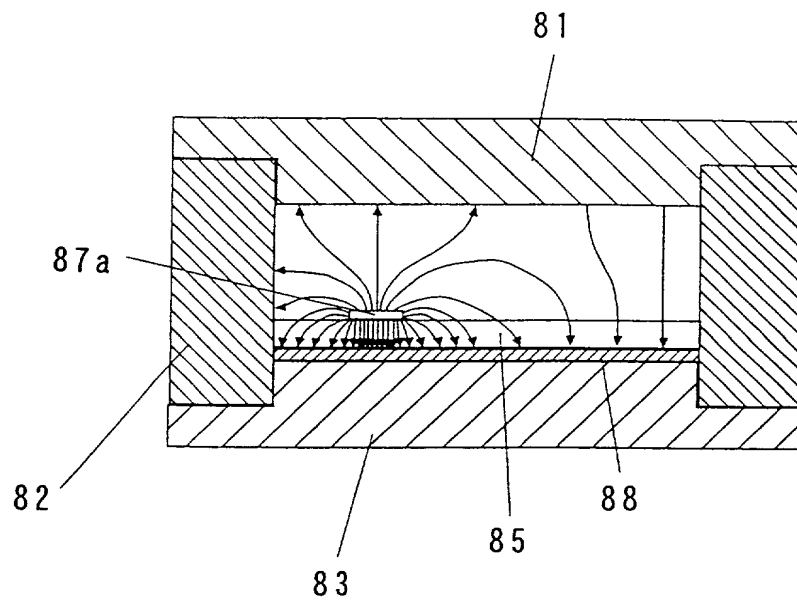


FIG. 11  
PRIOR ART

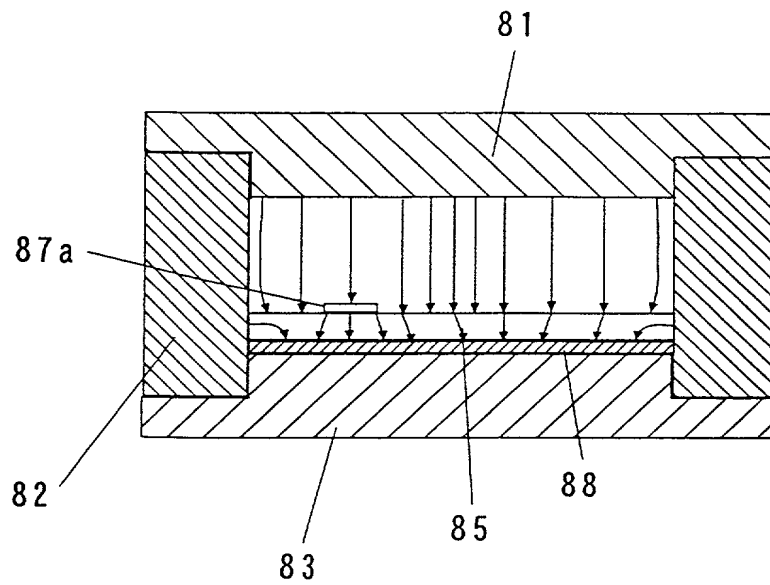


FIG. 12  
PRIOR ART

United States Patent Application

COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor I hereby declare that: my residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name; that

I verily believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or a joint inventor (if plural inventors are named below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:  
HIGH-FREQUENCY CIRCUIT ELEMENT

The specification of which

- a. ☒ is attached hereto  
b. ☐ was filed on \_\_\_\_\_ as application serial no. \_\_\_\_\_ and was amended on \_\_\_\_\_ (if applicable) (in the case of a PCT-filed application) described and claimed in international no. \_\_\_\_\_ filed and as amended on \_\_\_\_\_ (if any), which I have reviewed and for which I solicit a United States patent.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the patentability of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56 (attached hereto).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119/365 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on the basis of which priority is claimed:

- a. ☐ no such applications have been filed.  
b. ☒ such applications have been filed as follows:

FOREIGN APPLICATION(S), IF ANY, CLAIMING PRIORITY UNDER 35 USC § 119			
COUNTRY	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	DATE OF ISSUE (day, month, year)
Japan	11-071644	17 March 1999	
ALL FOREIGN APPLICATION(S), IF ANY, FILED BEFORE THE PRIORITY APPLICATION(S)			
COUNTRY	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	DATE OF ISSUE (day, month, year)

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120/365 of any United States and PCT international application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

U.S. APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	STATUS (patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code § 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

U.S. PROVISIONAL APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (Day, Month, Year)

I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or patent agent(s) to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith:

Albrecht, John W.	Reg. No. 40,481	Larson, James A.	Reg. No. 40,443
Anderson, Gregg I.	Reg. No. 28,828	Lasky, Michael B.	Reg. No. 29,555
Ansems, Gregory M.	Reg. No. 42,264	Liepa, Mara E.	Reg. No. 40,066
Batzli, Brian H.	Reg. No. 32,960	Lindquist, Timothy A.	Reg. No. 40,701
Beard, John L.	Reg. No. 27,612	Lynch, David W.	Reg. No. 36,204
Black, Bruce E.	Reg. No. 41,622	Marschang, Diane L.	Reg. No. 35,600
Blasdel, Thomas L.	Reg. No. 31,329	McDaniel, Karen D.	Reg. No. 37,674
Bogucki, Raymond A.	Reg. No. 17,426	McDonald, Daniel W.	Reg. No. 32,044
Bruss, Steven C.	Reg. No. 34,130	McIntyre, Iain A.	Reg. No. 40,337
Byrne, Linda M.	Reg. No. 32,404	Mueller, Douglas P.	Reg. No. 30,300
Carlson, Alan G.	Reg. No. 25,959	Nelson, Albin J.	Reg. No. 28,650
Caspers, Philip P.	Reg. No. 33,227	Pauly, Daniel M.	Reg. No. 40,123
Chiapetta, James R.	Reg. No. 39,634	Phillips, John B.	Reg. No. 37,206
Clifford, John A.	Reg. No. 30,247	Plunkett, Theodore	Reg. No. 37,209
Cochran, William W.	Reg. No. 26,652	Pytel, Melissa J.	Reg. No. 41,512
Daignault, Ronald A.	Reg. No. 25,968	Reich, John C.	Reg. No. 37,703
Daley, Dennis R.	Reg. No. 34,994	Reiland, Earl D.	Reg. No. 25,767
Dalglish, Leslie E.	Reg. No. 40,579	Rittmaster, Ted R.	Reg. No. 32,933
Daulton, Julie R.	Reg. No. 36,414	Schmaltz, David G.	Reg. No. 39,828
DeVries Smith, Katherine M.	Reg. No. 42,157	Schuman, Mark D.	Reg. No. 31,197
DiPietro, Mark J.	Reg. No. 28,707	Schumann, Michael D.	Reg. No. 30,422
Edell, Robert T.	Reg. No. 20,187	Scull, Timothy B.	Reg. No. 42,137
Epp Ryan, Sandra	Reg. No. 39,667	Sebald, Gregory A.	Reg. No. 33,280
Funk, Steven R.	Reg. No. 37,830	Skoog, Mark T.	Reg. No. 40,178
Glance, Robert J.	Reg. No. 40,620	Soderberg, Richard	Reg. No. P- 43,352
Golla, Charles E.	Reg. No. 26,896	Sumner, John P.	Reg. No. 29,114
Gorman, Alan G.	Reg. No. 38,472	Sumners, John S.	Reg. No. 24,216
Gould, John D.	Reg. No. 18,223	Tellekson, David K.	Reg. No. 32,314
Gregson, Richard	Reg. No. 41,804	Trembath, Jon R.	Reg. No. 38,344
Gresens, John J.	Reg. No. 33,112	Underhill, Albert L.	Reg. No. 27,403
Hamre, Curtis B.	Reg. No. 29,165	Vandenburgh, J. Derek	Reg. No. 32,179
Hillson, Randall A.	Reg. No. 31,838	Vradenburgh, Anna M.	Reg. No. 39,868
Holzer, Jr., Richard J.	Reg. No. 42,668	Welter, Paul A.	Reg. No. 20,890
Johnston, Scott W.	Reg. No. 39,721	Wahl, John R.	Reg. No. 33,044
Kadievitch, Natalie D.	Reg. No. 34,196	Whipps, Brian	Reg. No. 43,261
Kastelic, Joseph M.	Reg. No. 37,160	Wickhem, J. Scot	Reg. No. 41,376
Kettelberger, Denise	Reg. No. 33,924	Williams, Douglas J.	Reg. No. 27,054
Knearl, Homer L.	Reg. No. 21,197	Witt, Jonelle	Reg. No. 41,980
Kowalchyk, Alan W.	Reg. No. 31,535	Wood, William J.	Reg. No. 42,236
Kowalchyk, Katherine M.	Reg. No. 36,848	Xu, Min S.	Reg. No. 39,536
Kubota, Glenn M.	Reg. No. 44,197		
Lacy, Paul E.	Reg. No. 38,946		

I hereby authorize them to act and rely on instructions from and communicate directly with the person/assignee/attorney/firm/organization who/which first sends/sent this case to them and by whom/which I hereby declare that I have consented after full disclosure to be represented unless/until I instruct Merchant & Gould P.C. to the contrary.

Please direct all correspondence in this case to Merchant & Gould P.C. at the address indicated below:

Merchant & Gould P.C.  
3100 Norwest Center  
90 South Seventh Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55402-4131



I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

2	<b>Full Name Of Inventor</b>	<b>Family Name</b> OKAZAKI	<b>First Given Name</b> Yasunao	<b>Second Given Name</b>
0	<b>Residence &amp; Citizenship</b>	<b>City</b> Shiga	<b>State or Foreign Country</b> Japan	<b>Country of Citizenship</b> Japan
1	<b>Post Office Address</b>	<b>Post Office Address</b> 2-7-28, Shibukawa, Kusatsu-shi		<b>State &amp; Zip Code/Country</b> Shiga 525-0026/JAPAN
<b>Signature of Inventor 201:</b>			<b>Date:</b>	
			Yasunao Okazaki March 9, 2000	
2	<b>Full Name Of Inventor</b>	<b>Family Name</b> ENOKIHARA	<b>First Given Name</b> Akira	<b>Second Given Name</b>
0	<b>Residence &amp; Citizenship</b>	<b>City</b> Nara	<b>State or Foreign Country</b> Japan	<b>Country of Citizenship</b> Japan
2	<b>Post Office Address</b>	<b>Post Office Address</b> 4-3-506, Saidaijikunimicho 1-chome, Nara-shi		<b>State &amp; Zip Code/Country</b> Nara 631-0823/JAPAN
<b>Signature of Inventor 202:</b>			<b>Date:</b>	
			Akira Enokihara March 9, 2000	
2	<b>Full Name Of Inventor</b>	<b>Family Name</b> SETSUNE	<b>First Given Name</b> Kentaro	<b>Second Given Name</b>
0	<b>Residence &amp; Citizenship</b>	<b>City</b> Osaka	<b>State or Foreign Country</b> Japan	<b>Country of Citizenship</b> Japan
3	<b>Post Office Address</b>	<b>Post Office Address</b> 4-24-9, Niwashirodai 4-cho, Sakai-shi		<b>State &amp; Zip Code/Country</b> Osaka 590-0133/JAPAN
<b>Signature of Inventor 203:</b>			<b>Date:</b>	
			Kentaro Setsune March 9, 2000	

## § 1.56 Duty to disclose information material to patentability.

(a) A patent by its very nature is affected with a public interest. The public interest is best served, and the most effective patent examination occurs when, at the time an application is being examined, the Office is aware of and evaluates the teachings of all information material to patentability. Each individual associated with the filing and prosecution of a patent application has a duty of candor and good faith in dealing with the Office, which includes a duty to disclose to the Office all information known to that individual to be material to patentability as defined in this section. The duty to disclose information exists with respect to each pending claim until the claim is canceled or withdrawn from consideration, or the application becomes abandoned. Information material to the patentability of a claim that is canceled or withdrawn from consideration need not be submitted if the information is not material to the patentability of any claim remaining under consideration in the application. There is no duty to submit information which is not material to the patentability of any existing claim. The duty to disclose all information known to be material to patentability is deemed to be satisfied if all information known to be material to patentability of any claim issued in a patent was cited by the Office or submitted to the Office in the manner prescribed by §§ 1.97(b)-(d) and 1.98. However, no patent will be granted on an application in connection with which fraud on the Office was practiced or attempted or the duty of disclosure was violated through bad faith or intentional misconduct. The Office encourages applicants to carefully examine:

(1) prior art cited in search reports of a foreign patent office in a counterpart application, and

(2) the closest information over which individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application believe any pending claim patentably defines, to make sure that any material information contained therein is disclosed to the Office.

(b) Under this section, information is material to patentability when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made of record in the application, and

(1) It establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a prima facie case of unpatentability of a claim;

or

(2) It refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant takes in:

(i) Opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or

(ii) Asserting an argument of patentability.

A prima facie case of unpatentability is established when the information compels a conclusion that a claim is unpatentable under the preponderance of evidence, burden-of-proof standard, giving each term in the claim its broadest reasonable construction consistent with the specification, and before any consideration is given to evidence which may be submitted in an attempt to establish a contrary conclusion of patentability.

(c) Individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application within the meaning of this section are:

(1) Each inventor named in the application:

(2) Each attorney or agent who prepares or prosecutes the application; and

(3) Every other person who is substantively involved in the preparation or prosecution of the application and who is associated with the inventor, with the assignee or with anyone to whom there is an obligation to assign the application.

(d) Individuals other than the attorney, agent or inventor may comply with this section by disclosing information to the attorney, agent, or inventor.

S/N Unknown

PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant:	OKAZAKI et al.	Examiner:	Unknown
Serial No.:	Unknown	Group Art Unit:	Unknown
Filed:	March 10, 2000	Docket No.:	10873.506-US-01
Title:			

---

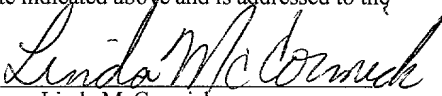
CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.10

'Express Mail' mailing label number: EL435547019US

Date of Deposit: March 10, 2000

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service 'Express Mail Post Office To Addressee' service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

By:

  
Name: Linda McCormick

CHANGE OF ATTORNEY ADDRESS IN APPLICATION

The Commissioner of Patents  
and Trademarks  
Washington, D.C. 20231

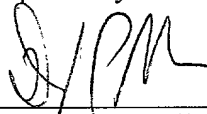
Dear Sir:

Please send all correspondence for this application to:

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.  
P.O. Box 2903  
Minneapolis, MN 55402-0903

Please direct all telephone calls to (612) 332.5300.

Respectfully submitted,



Dated: March 10, 2000

\_\_\_\_\_  
Douglas P. Mueller  
Reg. No. 30,300  
MERCHANT & GOULD, P.C.  
PO Box 2903  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-0903  
Telephone: (612) 332-5300

DPM/tvm